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LETTER DATED 4 MAY 1999 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have been instructed by my Government to draw your attention to the recent escalation of the aggression of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in which NATO is increasingly bombing civilian targets all over Yugoslavia and using weapons and ammunition prohibited by international conventions.

On 2 May 1999, NATO planes used special bombs to strike civilian targets, such as power plants, power transmission lines and transmission stations. The strikes short-circuited the power grid of the country, which accounted for a power outage in the preponderant part of Yugoslavia. Blackouts hit hospitals, water supply systems, food stores and bakeries. These atrocities affect the civilian population in the most direct way, in particular its most vulnerable categories: the sick, the elderly, children and newborn babies in incubators.

The air strikes were aimed at destroying the power grid of the country, the reconstruction of which is time-consuming and expensive. They constitute unprecedented crimes, genocidal in nature, as they target the entire population of Yugoslavia and are aimed at provoking shortages of food and other essential provisions which would cause widespread famine and, eventually, a humanitarian catastrophe of unseen proportions.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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I have the honour to forward herewith the open letter of Nedeljko Sipovac, Federal Minister for Agriculture of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, addressed to Ministers for Agriculture and to specialized governmental agencies in the field of agriculture concerning the effects of the NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the agriculture of the country.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Vladislav JOVANOVIĆ
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex

Open letter dated 30 April 1999 to Ministers for Agriculture and specialized governmental agencies in the field of agriculture

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has become one of the war polygons of the NATO alliance, on which are, unfortunately, being measured all technological war accomplishments. This is confirmed by the fact that on this country has been launched 11,000 tons of most destructive explosive or on average more than a kilogramme per citizen, which equates to the destructive power of about nine atomic bombs launched on Hiroshima.

On a densely inhabited continent such as Europe, where the ecological balance is rather sensitive, one of the basic world postulates, the postulate of ecological right, proclaimed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, has been annulled. The damage is being caused to the objects of the country whose area the United Nations has proclaimed a unique ecologically protected territory. By daily planned bombing NATO has caused ecological catastrophe, not only on the territory of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, but on the territories of all Balkan, Danube Basin, Mediterranean and European countries as well.

Ecological damage in previous wars has rarely been registered, and has usually been neglected. We do not want to rank the place of ecological damage on the list on which human victims and material damage are, but still we are positive that the fact of ecological catastrophe caused by NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia cannot be neglected any more.

Yugoslavia represents an extremely rich source of natural, authentic genetic resources. For many plants it represents the centre of ecological and genetic diversity. By this catastrophe the whole plant and animal world is endangered, as well as rare and endemic varieties of the living world that survive in rather small areas. Those damages are irreparable and those losses irrecoverable. Biological diversity is not the property of the State or nation on whose territory it can be found, and none of the generations of humans have exclusive right to enjoy them; such ecological losses affect the whole region or the whole of the world.

Every country that bases its development on agriculture, energetics and industry has stored on its territory smaller or bigger quantities of materials that are aggressive to human health or environment, damage to which can have extremely dangerous wide-ranging consequences. Despite all of this, NATO is carrying out planned bombing of chemical plants intended for civil purposes, and the bombing of these is causing direct ecological catastrophe. By aiming at plants for the production of artificial fertilizers a complex increase in the concentration of the toxic materials ammonia, chlorine and phosgene has been effected, and it is well known that those were used as war gases during the First World War. The result of the release of those dangerous materials, especially heavy metals, is also the "black rain" that recently fell over Pancevo, and which very soon will be falling over Europe.

The increased measured level of radioactivity is the result of the use of bullets with impoverished uranium and it causes the disastrous degradation of nature and seriously endangers the human health of present and future generations. It also causes the extreme ecological endangerment of living nature and natural mechanisms for self-protection and self-regeneration.

By reactions of explosive substances, fires and the burning of great amounts of different materials and chemicals, and by the intensive actions of military aircraft, the millions of tons of oxygen that the living world needs have been irretrievably spent.

The damage caused to the ozone layer will have grave consequences for humankind, and the plant and animal world of the whole planet Earth, since it is well known that the damages do not occur only in the area of activity. A great number of the international regulations covering this field were brought into being by the very countries that are now breaking them.

The burning of vast quantities of oil, gasoline, crude oil, asphalt, tyres and other materials at high temperatures, and the operational and explosive charges of missiles, release into the atmosphere great amounts of toxic materials (estimated at over 1,000 million m^3). Especially dangerous is the vast quantity of sulphur dioxide released into the atmosphere. Those products of burning and disintegration are interacting among themselves, forming even more dangerous compounds, which are becoming part of the process of circulation of materials and energy and thus can be found on the surface of the Earth and directly in the food chain, disturbing the balance of flora and fauna, which in turn favours the development of plant and animal pests that are rapidly spreading outside of the polluted areas. The pollution permanently endangers the flora and fauna of the river basins of the Black Sea, the Adriatic Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. This makes the consequences of toxic effects huge and unpredictable.

Bombing vast areas of agricultural land causes the degradation of the very soil, destroying the surface layers resulting in the destruction of pedoflora and pedofauna, and lifting lower layers (laterization of soil) which take thousands of years to regenerate naturally.

The chain of consequences for agriculture of ecological catastrophe lasts for a long period of time, and only a small part of it can be repaired. Ecological damages in war are a question of international significance, since ecological losses are of a global nature. Considering all this, we think that there is no necessity for further proving that a momentary halting of NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is indispensable, in order to stop further human, material, economic and ecological catastrophe.

(Signed) Nedeljko SIPOVAC
Federal Minister for Agriculture